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Lynne Mattocks Lucas

CBC Newsletter

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 52 April 2006 Number 2

ASHEVILLE — NOTHING COULD BE FINER

By Gail Lankford

"Nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina in the morning." Those of you who join us in Asheville April 28-30 for our spring meeting will find this an appropriate tune to hum while enjoying the sights and sounds of bird migration around these southern mountains. If you travel on Thursday, April 27, you can also join field trips along the way. Or just come a day early to enjoy Asheville's vibrant downtown, the area's outstanding arts and crafts, or Biltmore Estate. An important reason to come to the meeting is to enjoy seeing your birding friends who live across our region, and to make new ones!

We have three special events planned for you. On Friday night we will have a dessert social from 7–8 pm. Joining us will be Wild for Life, a local bird rehab/education organization. They will have a variety of live hawks and owls for you to see "up close and personal". At the same time, a UNC Press representative will be present with "hot off the press" copies of the new edition of *Birds of the Carolinas* by Eloise Potter, James Parnell, Robert Teulings, and Ricky Davis. We hope to have some of these authors present for a book signing as well. The Friday night program will begin at 8 pm.

The third special event is a buffet dinner to be held on Saturday night from 6:30-8:00 before the 8:00 program. Dinner together is a great way to get to know new folks and visit with friends. The cost is $16.95 inclusive, and you must sign up and pay with your registration no later than April 21. The meal includes a salad bar, three vegetables, desserts, rolls, and beverage. One of the two entrees will be pan fried rainbow trout. Drinks from the hotel bar adjoining the meeting room can be brought into the room both nights.

Our Friday night speaker is Christine Kelly, Mountain Nongame Wildlife Biologist for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. She is in charge of the Peregrine Falcon research, and will present information on how the birds have fared over the past couple of years. She will also include some 2006 data, as late April is mid season for Peregrine nesting. On Saturday night our speaker will be Paul Super, Science Coordinator at the Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center on Purchase Knob, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. His subject will be "Protecting the Birds of the Smokies: Avian Research and Management." There will also be a brief business meeting one evening concerning nominations for the Executive Committee.

Field trips will begin on Thursday afternoon, with one trip for those traveling I-40 West, and one for those on I-26 West. There will be all-day and half-day trips Friday and Saturday, as usual. Please refer to the descriptions and schedule in this newsletter. Directions for field trips will be in your registration packet upon arrival. Registration begins Thursday night from 7-9 pm in the meeting room, and continues all day Friday.

Our meeting will be held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, 435 Smoky Park Hwy. This is one block south (turn right at end of exit ramp onto Hwy. 19/23 west) off Interstate 40 at Exit #44. The guest rooms are newly remodeled and include refrigerator, coffee maker, iron and board, data ports, two phones, and hair dryers. All but 30 rooms in the hotel are non-smoking. The rate is $69 plus 11% tax for one to four people. This rate is available until March 27. Cancellations must be made 72 hours in advance. For reservations call 828-665-2161 or 1-800-678-2161. The website is www.ashevilleramadaplaza.com.

Friday through Sunday a full breakfast buffet (not included in the rate) will be available starting at 6 am in the restaurant. The hotel has an atrium lobby with an indoor heated swimming pool. If you do not want a room with balcony overlooking the lobby (which supposedly has acoustical deadening), please remember to mention this when you make your reservation.

Call Gail Lankford (828-667-5755) between 9 am – 9 pm for further information or email her at whocooksforyou@charter.net. Simon Thompson, Elisha Mitchell Audubon, and Carolina Field Birders are our trip planners and leaders, along with other CBC members.

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Lynne Mattocks Lucas

CBC Memory *By Karen Bearden*

No more deadlines! In December I announced my resignation as editor of the *CBC Newsletter*. It's been over three years since I took over the role as editor. Since this is my last issue I thought I would write the *CBC Memory*!

My favorite part of the job has been asking for and receiving articles from you, the members of CBC. I enjoyed sharing your descriptions of your passion for birds, which is the main reason why I took this job. I especially like this issue with Ann's beautiful article about Ramona below and Ricky's story of his 2005 Big Year adventures. I LOVE birds, especially chickadees, as many of you know, so it's a joy to share that passion!

Many thanks to my husband, Joe, who helped with proof reading and computer frustrations. Miriam and Gary at Grass Roots Press are wonderful to work with! Thanks to Lynn, Lynne, Rob, Nicole, and Doug for use of their illustrations, and to many of you for the use of your photos. Thanks also to Donna Slyce for her *Just Outside the Window* column.

Hopefully, soon the *CBC Newsletter* will be delivered second class mail (finally!), which explains the new box on the front page. Steve Shultz has agreed to take on the role as editor beginning with the next issue. Good luck and have fun!

I look forward to just coming to the meetings for birding and socializing again! See you in our beautiful North Carolina mountains in April!! *HAPPY BIRDING!!*

Rare Bird Graces Forsyth County, North Carolina, February 28, 1925 - January 20, 2006 *By Ann Robertson*

Ramona Rodgers Snavely birded virtually all of her life. As a small child she tried to nurse a sick Northern Flicker to health but it died. She learned later that the flicker didn't eat the seeds she innocently tried to feed it. Apparently that incident launched a journey, a lifetime of learning. To quote her family, "[Ramona] devoted most of her life to a joyful pursuit of bird life, flowers, and the preservation of natural areas." What a wonderful summation!

According to long-time friend Royce Hough, Ramona was "enthralled by birds and by helping people appreciate birds. She lived what she believed." This all-consuming passion led Ramona to be involved in many ornithological entities. She helped form the local Audubon Society of Forsyth County and served in all of its official capacities. She remained the keeper of records until the end of her life. She served on the Board of the Carolina Bird Club in various offices from 1970 through 1983, and was awarded a letter of commendation for her CBC work in 1982. She was a Master Bander, a Research Assistant at both Wake Forest University and Salem College, an Ornithology Instructor at Forsyth Technical Community College, and advisor to numerous community organizations such as Historic Bethabara Park, Tanglewood Park, and Old Salem. She published several articles and was a regular contributor to *The Chat*. In fact, I suspect not a *Chat* has gone by without an entry from Ramona Snavely.

The list of her achievements is long, and I have but briefly touched upon them. But Ramona was much more than an impressive professional resume. She was known as "the face of the local Audubon Chapter." When anyone in Forsyth County had a question about birds, they found their way to Ramona. She must have fielded thousands of phone calls from people who were excited about something they saw and wanted to know what it was, or whether it had significance. I know I made several myself. She was unfailingly enthusiastic, pleasant, and helpful. She WANTED people to be as excited about and interested in birds as she was.

I visited Bob Witherington, charter member of the Carolina Bird Club and long-time birding companion of Ramona's, to learn about her early years. In one of those happy coincidences, his wife Marjorie was in high school with Ramona. She pulled out the 1942 annual, and I read Ramona's entry. The adjectives used to describe her were: "business-like," "perpetual smile," "raven hair." Though her hair had faded to gray, one of Ramona's enduring passions was the nesting Common Ravens of downtown Winston-Salem. I couldn't help but feel a chill when I thought about how the high school descriptions had foreshadowed the future. She was a no-nonsense person with a wonderful sense of humor, whose perpetual smile kept everyone's spirits up on the bleakest of days. And in one of the most moving and fitting tributes I can imagine, as the funeral procession left Centenary United Methodist Church in downtown Winston-Salem on that gray Monday of Ramona's burial, a lone Common Raven sailed over. (Thanks, Phil Dickinson, for that sighting!)

Common Raven by Jim Keighton

Ramona, we know you are up there somewhere. Wouldn't it be great if angels really do have wings and you can now join your beloved feathered friends in the unmatched freedom of flight?

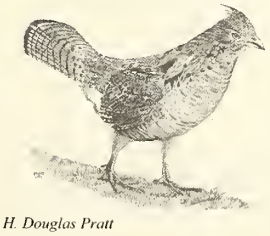
If anyone of us has "earned our wings," surely it is the rare bird named Ramona who graced our part of the world for eight decades.

My 2005 NC Big Year *By Ricky Davis*

It was a beautiful winter day, that December 29, when I was participating on the Lake Mattamuskeet Christmas Bird Count. I was in the vast Lake Landing impoundments area on the east end of the lake; alone, but surrounded by many birds. While enjoying this great spectacle of bird life, I came to the conclusion that a whole year of traveling the great state of North Carolina in pursuit of its birds would be the ultimate endeavor. I have been an active birder since the early 1970s and have always felt that coming to know the birds of my home state was the most important direction for me to take. For many years, numerous people had asked why I never attempted a Big Year. My responses were mostly about lacking the time due to the usual reasons of family and job responsibilities. Well, that day at the edge of Mattamuskeet, I came to the realization that I had never been that responsible a person anyway, and that 2005 would be when I would do a NC Big Year. Well, I only had two days to plan for the year-long effort, and I more or less decided to just bird the way I had for years, just a little more intently. This basically meant birding the coast as much as possible, getting to the mountains during spring and early summer, taking a few extra pelagic trips, and being ready to chase rare birds whenever they were found.

I figured the southern coastal area would provide the most potential species to start, and I was conveniently scheduled to do the Wilmington Count on January 1, followed by the Southport Count the next day. So at 5:30 am on January 1, I tallied my first birds of the year. My first weekend of birding exceeded my expectations and produced a list of 150 species, including Great Horned, Eastern Screech, and Northern Saw-whet Owls; Pacific and Artic Loons; Reddish Egret; Lark Sparrow; Black-chinned Hummingbird; Razorbill; and Thick-billed Murre. In February I went on a successful pelagic trip with great year birds being Northern Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, Red Phalarope, Great Skua, Iceland Gull, and Atlantic Puffin! I have been on many winter trips over the years, hoping for the elusive puffin for my state list, so I was very excited when I saw the first one sitting on the water that day, not knowing that we would come across at least 30 more—a new record total for the state!

Spring found me at the Outer Banks many times, including a day when I stumbled onto one of the best year birds I could hope for —a Swallow-tailed Kite at Pea Island! There just isn't another bird more exciting or awe-inspiring, no matter how many times you have seen it! The CBC spring meeting in Blowing Rock brought new bird highlights, along with many new spring arrivals, including Ruffed Grouse I heard near Price Park, a Dickcissel at Valle Crucis, and a Red Crossbill along the Parkway near Grandfather Mountain that Nell Moore told me about—thanks Nell! The success of a Big Year not only depends on spending a lot of time birding by yourself, it also depends on the help of many people who see things you don't.



H. Douglas Pratt

The discovery of a European Storm-Petrel on a Memorial Day weekend pelagic trip was an amazing sighting which provided me a Lifer, State Bird, and Big Year Bird! The following day I added the calling Black Rail at Bodie Island Lighthouse pond, one of the few birds that was heard-only during the year.

June came along and I decided that I would hit the mountains as much as possible. On the 4th of June as I was walking the road in the Alleghany unit of New River State Park, looking for Black-billed Cuckoo, a yellow-green warbler flew in front of me and perched in a bush along the road. I could not believe it, but I was looking at a female Mourning Warbler! This was a species I did not expect to be lucky enough to find during the year—another fortuitous sighting, and only my second in the state! Later in the month I visited Max Patch and Roan Mountain. The Roan area produced some great birds for summer including a territorial male Yellow-rumped Warbler, a territorial male Magnolia Warbler, at least five territorial Hermit Thrushes, and a singing Swainson's Thrush! Swainson's Thrushes have not been documented as breeders in North Carolina, and I could not determine if this one was on territory or not.

July meant the start of the second half of the Big Year, the beginning of the "summer doldrums" and I did very little traveling for the Big Year. I birded only a couple of times, mostly local. I went on the Hatteras pelagic trip on the 30th and saw an immature Red-billed Tropicbird, another species I thought I would miss. The month of August was mostly spent checking out the Triangle lakes near Raleigh such as Jordan and Falls for shorebirds since the lake levels were dropping due to the drought conditions. Falls Lake was especially productive and produced year birds such as Baird's Sandpiper, American Golden-Plover, and Big Year Bird number 330, a Wilson's Phalarope. With September approaching, I decided to make a plan for the rest of the year. It seemed obvious to me that the best way to sec most of the remaining species for the year would be to be at the Outer Banks as much as I could. Living in Rocky Mount, I was only two hours from Alligator River and 2.5 hours from Pea Island. I was birding the Banks 15 out of 18 weekends from September through December! I cannot think of a better way to spend the fall season in North Carolina.

The first weekend of September produced several year birds at Pea Island such as Hudsonian Godwit and Red-necked Phalarope. Later in the month as Hurricane Ophelia moved slowly up and along the coast, I decided the best place to be on the morning of Saturday the 17th to try to find any left-over misplaced seabirds carried by the storm would be the bridge at Oregon Inlet. I was not disappointed. Highlights among the large number of Cory's Shearwaters included 3 Black-capped Petrels; 1 Greater, 5 Audubon's, and 1 Manx Shearwater; 6 Wilson's Storm-Petrels; 1 Sabine's Gull; and 3 Bridled Terns. It was a very fascinating experience, especially since the Cory's were not leaving the area, seemingly unwilling to move past the bridge out the inlet and to the ocean!

October was filled with trips eastward as planned. I worked hard at Alligator River NWR for raptors and Pea Island for passerine migrants including Black-billed Cuckoo and Nashville Warbler. On the last weekend of the month I went to the Mattamuskeet, Pungo, and Lake Phelps areas. Two things stand out the most. The first was at the Lake Landing Impoundments on the east side of Mattamuskeet where I came across a huge Tree Swallow flock. The birds were roosting in the weeds in several

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impoundments and would fly up in a swirling storm of birds about every 10 minutes. I got to study many using my scope as they sat on the weed tops. There were at least 45,000! That is the most I have ever seen at one time in a relatively small area, and was a truly remarkable sight. The other event was finding a male Yellow-headed Blackbird in a flock of blackbirds right beside the highway on the south side of the lake. This was another species I felt sure that I should see if I worked at it hard enough.

November began with my annual stint at the Wings Over Water Nature festival on the Outer Banks. I figured that five days on the Banks with that many people looking for birds would produce several year birds. The first day I found a light phase adult Parasitic Jaeger flying by the beach at Rodanthe—another relatively easy pelagic species that I had missed on my earlier boat trips. This one was special because it was Big Year bird number 340. While I was at Pea Island I got a call with a sighting of three frigatebirds near the Point. Madness followed as I jumped in the car and proceeded to break several speed limits while cursing the heavy, slow traffic. Cell phones were buzzing as several birders each called with reports of the current location and direction the birds were traveling. Many others joined the chase in their vehicles as we raced southward toward the Buxton area. Finally north of Avon I got to their location and saw the frigatebirds. We followed the birds as they drifted northward back toward Pea Island and late in the afternoon, as we were looking over the ocean across from North Pond, four appeared over the Pond. They then drifted out over the ocean and headed back south as darkness approached. A most amazing experience for all of us – there were at least five seen that day—an unprecedented number for that late in the year in the Carolinas!

December was to be spent searching for Rough-legged Hawk and Golden Eagle at Alligator River, doing my usual string of Christmas Counts along the coast, and hoping that others would find something anywhere in the state that I could chase. While at work on the 1st, I got a call from Sam Cooper. He was looking at a Say's Phoebe! The bird was on a private farm in Carteret County where access is a problem. After several phone calls later that day, it was worked out that I and several others could get in to see the bird. By mid-morning the phoebe was relocated, and everyone was most happy. This was NC Big Year bird number 345 and set a new record! After many tries I finally saw a Rough-legged Hawk at Alligator River, number 346. The Franklin's Gull at Mann's Harbor was number 347 and the Cape Hatteras count on the 27th produced an Ash-throated Flycatcher in the campground, my last new year bird, and number 348.

The last day of the year I was helping out on the Wilmington Count, interestingly the same count I started the year on January 1. It was fitting that I ended the year at a place special to me - I did most of my early birdwatching there during the 70's. I really enjoyed that last day of the Big Year at Carolina Beach, reflecting upon the travels, time spent in the out-of-doors, and the many great birds I was fortunate to see. I traveled over 20,000 miles in the car during my 40+ trips to the coast and seven trips to the mountains. I ended up with a Big Year total of 348, but that total could easily be surpassed by someone else. I firmly believe that someone who spends most of the time at the coast as I did, and goes on a lot more pelagic trips than I did, could easily pass the 350 mark and 360 is possible. Also one must rely on others informing you of birds to chase, as I did. During the many trips to the coast, the wonderful time spent in the mountains, and the ramblings throughout the rest of the state, I can truly say that the experience was highly enjoyable and rewarding. When one chooses to spend as much time as possible being outdoors and observing the natural world, such an undertaking as a Big Year will be a most memorable one. Although I do not plan on attempting another Big Year any time soon, I heartily recommend it to anyone crazy enough!

Seen Any Good Birds Lately?

Have you seen any good birds lately? Ever wondered how all those sightings end up in the Briefs for the Files section of *The Chat*? Well you have to send them in to the editor! Bird sighting reports for the Briefs for the Files and the seasonal reports in the American Birding Association's journal *North American Birds* are compiled by the editor each season. The Briefs cover both Carolinas while the NAB Southern Atlantic region includes the Carolinas and Georgia. I send out notices asking for your bird sighting reports at the end of each season. Mostly these notices go out to the two listservs on the internet for the area – Carolinabirds (NC, SC) and GABO-L (GA). I realize that not everybody subscribes to these, so if you would like to receive the notices each season, please send me your email address. I will then send you the notice that is sent to the listservs. For those of you who have not gotten into computers and emails, you will have to remember to send me your sightings. The first page of the Briefs for the Files in *The Chat* has information on when the reports need to reach the editor each season. Be sure to send in any sighting that you think is rare, unusual, or just plain interesting! It is the editor's job to decide which is noteworthy enough for inclusion. I am looking forward to hearing about all your bird sightings of interest for the next season!

Ricky Davis, 608 Smallwood Drive, Rocky Mount, NC 27804; 252-443-0276; rdnc@earthlink.net.

New Members

Marianne Barrowman
Charlotte, NC

Mary Bridges
Goldsboro, NC

Frances Bulluck
Clarkesville, GA

Leonela and Mark Connolly
Raleigh, NC

Jason and Michelle Giovannone
West Columbia, SC

Richard Hayes
North Charleston, SC

Bruce and Melinda Jones
Wilmington, NC

Jo O'Keefe
Carolina Shores, NC

Barbara Z. Phillips
Smyrna, NC

Deirdre Poe
Greensboro, NC

Barbara Reber
Newport Beach, CA

Beth Schilling
Knoxville, TN

Deck Stapleton
Stem, NC

Deceased Members

Ramona Snavely

CBC Bonus Field Trips

Congaree National Park, SC, May 6-7. Lead by Robin Carter. The main rendezvous for this weekend will be the Gateway Plaza shopping center in Sumter, SC. This small shopping center is on the south side of US 76 and US 378 on the west side of Sumter (about 4 miles east of Shaw Air Force Base on the main road to Columbia). Gateway Plaza is about 0.2 miles west of US 521. It is just east of the Hampton Inn and the Waffle House. It is right across the street from a Blockbuster Video.

The first event, which is optional, is a welcome dinner for those who get to Sumter early enough on Friday evening. We will go to the Red Bone Alley Restaurant in Gateway Plaza shopping center at 7 pm. Those who plan to attend this dinner should contact Robin Carter in advance so we know how many places to reserve at this popular restaurant.

There are five motels along US 76 / US 378, strung out just west of Gateway Plaza shopping center, but all within a half mile of Gateway Plaza: Hampton Inn, Fairfield Inn, Days Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Comfort Suites.

The main rendezvous for the weekend is at **5:30 am on May 6th at Gateway Plaza**. This is before the continental breakfasts will be served at the hotels. There is a Waffle House adjacent to Gateway Plaza and a 24 hour Kangaroo convenience store across the street from Gateway Plaza.

We will get an early start so that we can be at our first birding destination (the Bates Fork Tract of Congaree National Park) shortly after dawn. This part of the park is about 26 miles from Sumter. We plan to bird this area for several hours on foot. This is an old hunt club and so has a wide range of habitats—floodplain forest, creeks, old clearcuts, and an agricultural field.

Once we are done with the Bates Fork Tract we will drive about 17 miles to the Congaree National Park Visitor Center and explore the old growth forest part of the park along the boardwalk loop. Lunch will be at a picnic shelter next to the Visitor Center, so participants should pack a picnic lunch.

After lunch we will drive about 30 miles to Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve, on bluffs along the south side of the Congaree River, overlooking the park. From Congaree Bluffs we will return to Sumter (about 45 miles), for an early dinner. For those who still want more birding we will rendezvous again at Gateway Plaza at 6 pm. We will drive east for 23 miles to Longleaf Pine Heritage Preserve. This 800-acre preserve has four Red-cockaded Woodpecker clusters (three of which are easily accessible). It also has breeding Bachman's Sparrows in a beautiful longleaf pine savanna. We will hike in for about one mile to the best savanna and look for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers as they return to their roost trees just before sunset. There should also be a fine evening chorus of Bachman's Sparrows, Common Nighthawks, Chuck-will's-widows, Whip-poor-wills, and perhaps a few owls and frogs.

On Sunday morning we will rendezvous at Gateway Plaza at 7:30 am. The Sunday morning field trip will be to the Cuddo Unit of Santee NWR and Potato Creek Waterfowl Area, about one hour's drive from Sumter, near I-95.

The trip is limited to 20 participants and costs $10 per person. Contact Dana Harris at srharris@mindspring.com or 224-406-4198 before sending in your registration. For questions contact Robin Carter at 803-782-8820 or rcarter@sc.rr.com.

The New River, NC, June 10. The New River is home to some 90+ breeding species including most of our flycatchers, both orioles, Warbling Vireo, and cuckoos. Warblers are well represented including Golden-winged, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Prairie, and Yellow-breasted Chat. We will bird areas along the river as well as some of the beautiful New River State Park system. Curtis Smalling, Mountain Biologist for Audubon NC, will lead the trip. **We'll meet at the Ingles parking lot in West Jefferson at 7 am** (60 Ashemont Drive, off US-221 BR/NC-194). Cost is $10 and limited to 15 participants. There are many hotels to choose from in the Boone area or the Nation's Inn in West Jefferson (336-246-2080) or the Best Western Eldreth Inn at Mount Jefferson (336-246-8845). Contact Dana at 224-406-4198 or srharris@mindspring.com before sending in your registration. For more information contact Curtis at 828-265-0198 or csmalling@audubon.org.

The Splendor of the Oregon Coast

Friday, August 11 - Sunday, August 20

Starting in Portland, we'll head east into the Cascades and around Mt. Hood (Clark's Nutcracker, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, and Mountain Chickadee). After exploring the coniferous forests of this beautiful area we will head south towards Bend, where we will again spend a full day (American Dipper, Lewis's and White-headed Woodpeckers). Other highlights include two days in Malheur (Trumpeter Swan, Western Grebe, and Long-billed Curlew), driving the beautiful Oregon coast towards Yaquina Head and Tillamook (Brandt's Cormorant, Tufted Puffin, and Black Oystercatcher), and a pelagic trip out of Newport (Black-footed Albatross, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel). Estimated cost is $1,500. For a full itinerary and birdlist, please contact Simon Thompson at 1-866 253-4247, 1-828-253-4247, or Travel@birdventures.com.

Elections in Asheville

Each year during the spring meeting the club membership votes to elect officers to the Executive Committee. Those who are elected then work for the club to administer the bylaws, establish priorities, plan bonus field trips, and organize the great meetings that we all enjoy in fall, winter, and spring. Below are the positions that need to be filled in the Asheville elections and the actions being recommended by the Nomination Committee:

President — re-elect Stephen Harris for another term
SC VP — elect Marion Clark
Secretary — elect Dana Harris
Treasurer — re-elect Bruce Smithson for another term
NC Member at Large — elect Dwayne Martin
SC Member at Large — elect Linda Kolb

Thanks to those who have agreed to serve, and thanks to everyone who gives them moral and practical support when it comes time to plan the three yearly meetings. Let's give them a good showing of support when we vote in April.

Important Bird Areas of SC Represent Diverse Habitat and Species

By Ann Shahid

Audubon SC's Important Bird Area Program (IBA), affiliated with Bird Life International, has designated thirty-nine IBAs since the inception of the program. These sites are found statewide and represent diverse habitat and species. Francis Beidler Forest, Cape Romaine NWR, Silver Bluff Audubon Center, Table Rock State Park, Congaree National Park, Hobcaw Barony, and Sand Hills State Forest are just a few of the designated IBA sites. To date 1,075,180 acres are included in the SC IBA program. There are five prospective IBAs that are in the nomination process and four more that need further data to support their nomination. Once this is accomplished, it is the plan of the IBA Program to merge adjoining IBAs, or those in close proximity to each other, to form Regional (or Merged) IBAs. These areas will direct the conservation efforts of SC Audubon.

Virginia Beach Birding Recap *By John Ennis*

The Carolina Bird Club winter meeting at Virginia Beach began Thursday, February 2, with an open house at the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum and closed Sunday with 133 species tallied. Field trips included the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Back Bay NWR, Great Dismal Swamp, and the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center.

Birding on the CBBT photo by John Ennis

On Friday, a group led by Bob Ake from Norfolk spotted a Sooty Shearwater off the beach at Back Bay. The group watched the bird cruise around, landing several times in the water. Their other birds included Bonaparte's Gull and Horned and Red-necked Grebes. Another Friday trip scored a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Lynnhaven Inlet.

Doug Pratt, Research Curator of Birds at the Museum of Natural Sciences, presented "Illustrating Nature: Where Art Meets Science" on Friday night, along with a display of his original art work. Doug reviewed his work of over thirty plus years as an ornithologist and illustrator and shared some of his techniques. It was the stunning presentation we expected from this internationally-renowned scientist!

Iceland Gull photo by Kent Fiala

Winter birding on the CBBT was a huge treat as usual, yielding Harlequins, all three species of scoter, Brant, and over a thousand Long-tailed Ducks. Obviously, the crown jewel of the CBBT was the Iceland Gull. Astoundingly, this bird was found on Friday and again on Saturday (by groups led by Stephen Harris) on different islands and under different circumstances.

Michael Male and Judy Fieth of Blue Earth Films were our Saturday evening speakers. Their excellent presentation, titled "A Year in the Desert" showed their making of a nature film featuring the Bitter Lake NWR. As an encore, they showed one of their short films on Dragonflies and Damselflies.

Overall, it was a great CBC…the speakers, Virginia and CBC trip leaders, and birds made it a very enjoyable event!

The North Carolina Birding Trail - A Progress Update! *By Salinda Daley*

The North Carolina Birding Trail (NCBT) recently closed out the coastal plain Site Nomination Process. As of Feb 1, 2006, 48 sites across the coastal plain have been approved; 37 sites are still pending review. Over the next month or two, the Site Nomination Committee will complete review of all of the site nominations and the Steering Committee will finalize the sites included in the coastal component of the trail. In the coming year, the NCBT will move westward to the Piedmont and then begin on the mountains in 2008.

No birding or wildlife trail is complete without a trail guide or map to direct visitors to the sites. The NCBT Steering Committee has been reviewing maps and guides from other state trails to develop the best options for the NCBT. The NCBT guides will be developed as three stand-alone publications for the coastal plain, piedmont, and mountains. Plans are to publish the coastal component guide in 2006, as funds allow. A promotional brochure about the NCBT is currently in development. It should be ready for distribution by spring 2006.

The success of the NCBT will depend on the support and the participation of agencies, organizations, communities, businesses, and individuals across the state. If you would like to show your support by becoming a Partner, Sponsor, or a volunteer for the initiative, please contact the NCBT at info@ncbirdingtrail.org or 919-604-5183. And for up-to-date information on the NCBT initiative, visit the web site at www.ncbirdingtrail.org.

Asheville Field Trip Schedule

Trips will be limited to a maximum of 15 participants and minimum of 6. Please consider bringing adequate drinks and snacks on all morning trips in case there is not time for lunch before your afternoon trip; bring your lunch on all-day trips. All trips except #1 and #2 depart from the Ramada. Gather with your leader in the meeting room.

Thursday, April 27

Trip #1 Curtis Creek Road - 1:00 pm
Trip #2 Jackson Park - 1:00 pm
Trip #3 Introduction to Asheville Brew Pubs - 5:30 pm

Friday, April 28

Half-day morning
Trip #4 Craggy Gardens/BRP – 7:00 am
Trip #5 Chimney Rock Park/Lake Lure – 7:00 am
Trip #6 Jackson Park – 7:10 am
Trip #7 Fletcher Park/Lake Julian – 7:10 am
Trip #8 Charles D. Owen Park/Warren Wilson – 7:20 am
Trip #9 Hooper Lane/Mills River Valley – 7:20 am
Trip #10 Beaver Lake Sanctuary/Riverside Dr. – 7:30 am
Trip #11 Arboretum/Bent Creek – 7:45 am

Half-day afternoon
Trip #12 Craggy Gardens/BRP – 1:00 pm
Trip #13 Chimney Rock Park/Lake Lure – 1:00 pm
Trip #14 Jackson Park – 1:10 pm
Trip #15 Fletcher Park/Lake Julian – 1:10 pm
Trip #16 Charles D. Owen Park/Warren Wilson – 1:20 pm
Trip #17 Hooper Lane/Mills River Valley – 1:20 pm
Trip #18 Beaver Lake Sanctuary/Riverside Dr. – 1:30 pm
Trip #19 Arboretum/Bent Creek – 1:30 pm

All-day
Trip #20 Max Patch/Lake Junaluska – 6:45 am
Trip #21 Heintooga/Oconaluftee/GSMNP – 6:45 am
Trip #22 Mt. Mitchell/BRP – 7:00 am
Trip #23 Cathey's Creek/Wagon Gap Rd – 7:00 am

Saturday, April 29

Half-day morning
Trip #24 Craggy Gardens/BRP – 7:00 am
Trip #25 Chimney Rock Park/Lake Lure – 7:00 am
Trip #26 Jackson Park – 7:10 am
Trip #27 Fletcher Park/Lake Julian – 7:10 am
Trip #28 Charles D. Owen Park/Warren Wilson – 7:20 am
Trip #29 Hooper Lane/Mills River Valley – 7:20 am
Trip #30 Beaver Lake Sanctuary/Riverside Dr. – 7:30 am
Trip #31 Arboretum/Bent Creek – 7:45 am

Half-day afternoon
Trip #32 Craggy Gardens/BRP – 1:00 pm
Trip #33 Chimney Rock Park/Lake Lure – 1:00 pm
Trip #34 Jackson Park – 1:10 pm
Trip #35 Fletcher Park/Lake Julian – 1:10 pm
Trip #36 Charles D. Owen Park/Warren Wilson – 1:20 pm
Trip #37 Hooper Lane/Mills River Valley – 1:20 pm
Trip #38 Beaver Lake Sanctuary/Riverside Dr. – 1:30 pm
Trip #39 Arboretum/Bent Creek – 1:30 pm

All-day
Trip #40 Max Patch/Lake Junaluska – 6:45 am
Trip #41 Mt. Pisgah/BRP South - 6:45 am
Trip #42 Cataloochee Valley/GSMNP – 7:00 am
Trip #43 Dillingham/Douglas Falls – 7:00 am

Sunday, April 30

Birding on your own

ASHEVILLE FIELD TRIP DESCRIPTIONS

Trip 1. Curtis Creek Road. This well-maintained gravel road passes through a beautiful cove forest of hemlock and rhododendron as it climbs along Curtis Creek 11 miles to the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is the perfect setting for hearing and seeing Swainson's Warbler, as well as Worm-eating, Hooded, Ovenbird, Northern Parula, Louisiana Waterthrush, and many others. Meet at the Stuckey's parking lot at Exit 75, Parker Padgett Rd., off I-40. Once reaching the Parkway, you will have the option of returning to I-40 to continue to Asheville, or turning left onto the Parkway and driving about 40 miles south on the Parkway to the exit for Hwy. 74, which connects with I-40. Restrooms: yes. Walking: limited/level/ hills.

Trip 2, 6, 14, 26, 34. Jackson Park. With a wide range of habitats, Jackson Park is one of the finest passerine migration flyways in North Carolina. This is a good place to see an outstanding selection of spring migrants. Birds found here include warblers such as Golden-winged and Blue-winged, thrushes, vireos, and flycatchers. This city park has easy walking on the Nature Trail, Bottomland Trail, and the famous Warbler Trail. On Thursday, meet at the Administration building parking lot. Directions: Exit 49-B off I-26 onto Hwy. 64 West (Four Seasons Blvd.) to Hendersonville. In about 2 miles you will pass Four Seasons Marsh on the left; turn left at the next light onto Harris St. (look for the brown Jackson Park sign at the light). Go straight through the 4-way stop, and when Harris St. dead ends at 4th St., turn left and proceed across the bridge and up the hill to the Administration building parking lot on the left. Restrooms: yes. Walking: mostly level. Roundtrip: approx. 45 miles.

Trip 9, 17, 29, 37. Hooper Lane/Mills River Valley. Expect shorebirds such as Least and Solitary Sandpipers, both yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Plover, and possibly late Upland Sandpipers. The presence of these birds at Hooper Lane is strongly dependent on the condition of the fields and the weather. Bobolinks and several sparrows may be common in the fields. Along the river the trees and shrubs may have early Willow Flycatcher and Blue Grosbeak, plus warblers and other passerines. Restrooms: at nearby gas station. Walking: level. Round trip: approx. 36 miles.

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Trip 7, 15, 27, 35. Fletcher Park/Lake Julian. Fletcher Park is a wonderful small city park that lies in the French Broad River Valley. Several good birds have been reported here, including Philadelphia Vireo, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Baltimore Oriole. A small wetland has breeding Willow Flycatcher and several freshwater species may also be seen here. Lake Julian, a Progress Energy Reservoir, is heated throughout the year which helps bring migrating water birds. Even at the end of April there could be some loons, ducks, geese, cormorants, terns, and gulls still around. Restrooms: yes. Walking: level. Round trip: approx. 30 miles.

Trip 10, 18, 30, 38. Beaver Lake Sanctuary/ Riverside Drive. THIS TRIP WILL CONCENTRATE ON IDENTIFYING AND LEARNING BIRD SONGS. The sanctuary's mix of woods, marsh, and lake views, plus nearby open areas often yields a good mix of birds. Warbling Vireo, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Brown-headed Nuthatch all breed in the area and are frequently seen. The whole sanctuary is accessed by a raised boardwalk. Nearby are a couple of small parks by the river that can be good birding. Restrooms: at library nearby. Walking: level. Round trip: approx. 18 miles.

Trip 11, 19, 31, 39. WNC Arboretum/Bent Creek. The Arboretum, part of Pisgah National Forest, is a beautiful facility with formal and informal gardens, wonderful stone buildings, and a superb outdoor bonsai exhibit. Easy walking trails extend through many habitats, making it easy to observe spring migrants, including a good selection of warblers, vireos and thrushes, and butterflies and wildflowers. Admission/parking is $6 per car so carpooling is best. Restrooms: yes. Walking: level/ hills. Round trip: approx. 16 miles.

Trip 5, 13, 25, 33. Chimney Rock Park/Lake Lure. Chimney Rock Park, a 1,000 acre privately owned park (admission $10 per person), has several trails through mixed hardwood forests and rhododendron thickets. It is a great place for Worm-eating, Swainson's, and Cerulean Warblers, and many other species, including Peregrine Falcon. The Hickory Nut Falls Trail is moderate but easy to walk and is the best for birding. Most of the upper trails are steeper, but there is an elevator to the top. Restrooms: yes. Walking: level/steep stairs. Round trip: approx. 68 miles.

Trip 4, 12, 24, 32. Craggy Gardens. The Blue Ridge Parkway from Craven Gap, just north of the Folk Art Center, to Bull Gap is one of the most reliable areas for the much sought-after Cerulean Warbler. Of course, we will stop at overlooks along the way for other warblers, such as Hooded, Blackburnian, Kentucky, and Ovenbird, and other nesting/migrant species including Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Blue-headed Vireo. The road up to the picnic grounds has a wonderful array of wildflowers. Restrooms: yes. Walking: limited level/hills. Round trip: approx. 50 miles.

Trip 8, 16, 28, 36. Charles D. Owen Park/Warren Wilson. The Swannanoa River flows through this county park well-known to locals as a good birding spot. Both Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and Yellow-throated Vireo nest along the river. After an easy walk around a tree-lined lake, we'll walk a short distance to the farm fields of Warren Wilson College. Migrant Blue-winged warblers have been seen the last few years, along with typical farmland birds such as Yellow-breasted Chat, Northern Bobwhite, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Restrooms: yes/ Owen Park. Walking: level. Round trip: approx. 36 miles.

H. Douglas Pratt

Trip 20, 40. Max Patch/ Lake Junaluska. If you want to see Golden-winged Warblers, this is the trip for you! Generally 15-20 other warbler species may be found, including Blackburnian, Canada, and Chestnut-sided. Least Flycatcher can be plentiful, along with Winter Wren, Veery, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and other middle elevation species. The Lake often has waterfowl surprises. Restrooms: no. Walking: limited/level/ hills. Round trip: approx. 75 miles.

Trip 21. Heintooga/Oconaluftee/GSMNP. This is one of the highest sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway. From the Parkway at Balsam Gap, the road climbs towards Waterrock Knob into northern hardwoods and spruce-fir forest types. There are good spots for Least Flycatcher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Veery along the way to Heintooga Road. This 9-mile spur road continues to a parking area, where a short trail leads to one of the most spectacular views in the mountains, a panorama of Great Smoky Mountains National Park with Mt. LeConte at the center. This is a dependable spot for Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and Blackburnian Warbler. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center grounds can have Bobolink, Summer Tanager, and warblers. Restrooms: yes. Walking: limited/level/hills. Round Trip: approx. 115 miles.

Trip 22. Mt. Mitchell/Blue Ridge Parkway. The Blue Ridge Parkway from Craven Gap, just north of the Folk Art Center, to Bull Gap is one of the most reliable areas for the much sought-after Cerulean Warbler. Of course we will stop at overlooks along the way for other warblers, such as Hooded, Kentucky, and Ovenbird, and other species including Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Blue-headed Vireo. Then on to Mt. Mitchell in search of Red Crossbill, Winter Wren, Pine Siskin, Hermit Thrush, and other high elevation birds. Restrooms: yes. Walking: limited/ level/hills. Round trip: approx. 60 miles.

Trip 23. Cathey's Creek/Wagon Gap Road. The trip includes open pastures and farmland where sparrows, meadowlarks, and raptors should be found. Bobolinks and pipits are possible. We then travel up a gravel road through Pisgah National Forest along Cathey's Creek for warblers, vireos, and thrushes. Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers will be common. This trip includes the Pisgah Fish Hatchery and the parking area for Looking Glass Rock, which has a Peregrine Falcon aerie. Along Wagon Gap Road there is good birding at Davidson River campground and the Cradle of Forestry Visitor Center. Restrooms: yes. Walking: limited/level/hills. Round trip: approx 93 miles.

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Trip 41. Mt. Pisgah/BRP. This trip will stop at overlooks for migrants, such as Canada, Black-throated Blue, and Chestnut-sided Warblers, as well as Scarlet Tanager. The area around the Pisgah Inn is good for finding Cedar Waxwing, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and perhaps a soaring Common Raven. From there we will go south to Devil's Courthouse where Northern Saw-whet Owls call at night. Then it's to Graveyard Fields for the birds and the outstanding scenery. We will try for Ruffed Grouse near here. The Black Balsam Forest Rd. leads to a parking area with Golden-winged Warblers, Veerys, and Least Flycatchers (only in late May.) Restrooms: yes. Walking: limited/level/hills. Round trip: approx. 90 miles.

Trip 42. Cataloochee Valley/GSMNP. THIS TRIP WILL CONCENTRATE ON BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES. Most visitors see Great Smoky Mountains National Park only from the highway, as they traverse US 441 between Cherokee, NC and Gatlinburg, TN or explore the Cades Cove loop road bumper-to-bumper. There are other places to enjoy the park, however, without all the traffic and the crowds. The Cataloochee Valley is one of these, surrounded by 6000' peaks. Cataloochee was a settled valley, much like Cade's Cove, and several historic structures remain. We will combine roadside birding with short hikes, enjoying the birds, butterflies, spring wildflowers, possible elk, and the always inspiring scenery of the surrounding Great Smoky Mountains. Restrooms: yes/campground. Walking: level/hills. Round trip: approx. 90 miles.

Trip 43 Dillingham/Douglas Falls. THIS TRIP WILL CONCENTRATE ON WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS. This area of the Craggy Mountains is a haven for warblers and, at the upper end, high elevation breeding birds. Expect a wide variety of warblers along the various elevations (2,500 to over 5,000 feet) including numerous Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Canada, and Chestnut-sided along with Northern Parula, plenty of Ovenbirds, and many others along the road up to the top. The upper elevations should produce singing Winter Wren, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and perhaps patrolling Common Ravens and drumming Ruffed Grouse. Over 50 species of spring wildflowers are easily seen. Restrooms: no. Walking: limited/level/hills. Round trip: approx. 70 miles.

Trip 3. Introduction to Asheville Brew Pubs. Asheville now has five micro-breweries making fine craft beers, the most in NC. They are Highland, Green Man, French Broad, Asheville Pizza, and Pisgah. One can sample drafts of four of these excellent beers downtown at different establishments. The fifth is new, but by the meeting may be available as well. If you are a beer lover who appreciates micro-brews, you will appreciate the quality of these. Small samples and food are served at all the pubs. Make sure you designate a driver! (Yes, the two Asheville CBC members who are beer lovers [guess who] thought this one up, but neither is available to lead this outing!)

****

CBC Asheville Meeting and Bonus Trip Registration Form

Name(s) _____

Address _____City_____State_____ Zip_____

Day Phone _____ Evening phone _____ Email _____

_____Update my membership record with this address information. Remember to mail your membership renewals!

Thursday field trip choice #____ Friday field trip choices #_____/_____ Saturday field trip choices # _____/_____
AM PM AM PM

Enclosed is my check for ____ member ($15) registration(s), ____ nonmember ($20) registration(s), ____ Saturday night buffet ($16.95) registration(s), ____ Congaree National Park bonus trip ($10) registration(s), and ____ New River bonus trip ($10) registration(s). My total is $_____ for the above registrations.

Meeting registration at the door costs $25. The Saturday night buffet needs to be paid by April 21. CBC bonus trips need to be paid in advance.

Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trip leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip.

I release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature_____Date_____Signature_____Date_____

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Upcoming CBC Meetings

Savannah, GA September 29-October 1
Nags Head, NC January 26-28, 2007
Western NC - Spring 2007

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Bloomingdale, IL, 224-406-4198
srharris@mindspring.com

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Editor of *CBC Newsletter*, Karen Bearden
1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh, NC 27612
919-844-9050, chickadeebirders@earthlink.net
Submission deadlines are due the 1st of January, March, May, July, September, and November.
Headquarters Secretary, Dana Harris, Bloomingdale, IL
224-406-4198, srharris@mindspring.com

Rare Bird Alert: 704-332-BIRD
CBC Website: www.carolinabirdclub.org

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